



# KENSUKE'S KINGDOM

## KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER



### Context

*Kensuke's Kingdom* was written by Michael Morpurgo and was first published in 1999.

**Michael Morpurgo** – Michael Morpurgo is an author, poet and playwright who is known for his children's novels such as *War Horse* (1982) and *Private Peaceful* (2003). He is the author of over one hundred books in total. His skill in 'magical story-telling' and vivid description has often been widely celebrated. Morpurgo served as the Children's Laureate, from 2003-2005, and was made an MBE in 1999 for services to young people.



**Japan in World War II** – Japan entered World War II with a surprise attack on Pearl Harbour (a US military base) on December 7th, 1941. The Japanese fought on the side of the Axis powers with Nazi Germany and Italy, leading the fighting across Asia. The Japanese military culture of never accepting defeat meant that they were the last of the Axis to surrender – only after the losses suffered from two atomic bombs dropped on them by the USA.



**Japan** – Japan is an island country in east Asia, that is located in the Pacific Ocean. It is an archipelago of around 6,852 islands. There are four main islands: Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu and Shikoku, which make up around 97% of the land area. Because of its island habitat, historically Japanese culture has been greatly influenced by the sea – many Japanese people were fishermen. Modern-day Japan has many high-tech industries and huge cities.



**The Hiroshima and Nagasaki Bombs** – During the final stages of World War II, Japan was the final member of the Axis forces that had refused to surrender. To prevent a costly invasion (where many would die), the USA dropped two atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki within 3 days of each other, killing between 130,000 and 220,000 people. Japan surrendered to the Allies six days later, to end WWII.



### Main Characters

Consider what Morpurgo intended through his characterisation of each of the below...

**Michael** – Michael is the lead protagonist of the novel. He is eleven years old when his parents lose their jobs, and the family embarks on a sailing trip around the world. When Michael is thrown from the boat north of Australia, he finds himself on an island with only Stella the dog to remind him of home. He shows great mental strength in order to remain positive. He also strikes up a strong friendship towards Kensuke, who he stays loyal to even after leaving the island.

Quote: "I floated away into sleep. Into my dreams."

**Mother** – Michael's mother is an intelligent and strong-willed lady, who clearly loves Michael a great deal. She accepts Michael's father's dreams, and trains to be the skipper of the boat. She never gives up hope of finding Michael.

Quote: "My mother never showed the faintest tremor of fear."

**Stella** – Stella is Michael's family's dog, who is dearly loved, but is also viewed as somewhat of an annoyance at times! Stella goes overboard relatively early into the sailing trip, foreshadowing Michael being thrown from the ship. Stella also seems to have strong instincts that are beyond Michael's comprehension – for example, she seems to immediately recognise that Kensuke is a kind person, by following him.

Quote: "Stella had stayed with him. She came, but not at once."

**Kensuke** – Kensuke is an old Japanese former doctor and war veteran. He became marooned on the island towards the end of World War II, when he was the sole survivor of a Japanese ship that was bombed by the Americans. He is an intelligent man, who shows incredible craftsmanship and resourcefulness in order to survive on the island for so many years. He is also kind and generous, saving and looking after Michael (and the orang-utans) on the island.

Quote: "Kensuke. I. Kensuke. My island."

**Father** – Michael's father is made redundant at the beginning of the story, and so lives his dream by sailing around the world with his family. He is a practical man, who is able to fix things around the boat skilfully.

Quote: "This is Peggy Sue. Our new home."

**The Orang-Utans** – The orang-utans live on the island, which has been uninhabited by man until the arrival of Kensuke, and then Michael. The orang-utans are seen to be a valued prize for the poachers, who are courageously protected by Kensuke. The orang-utans appear to have accepted Kensuke as their leader, following him as he sings – particularly his favourite orang-utan – Tomodachi.

Quote: "Kensuke had to bribe him – a red banana for a pair of binoculars."

### Themes

A theme is an idea or message that runs throughout a text.

**Friendship and Isolation** – The story is a warming tale of how Michael and Kensuke become close companions, showing that friendship has the ability to cross boundaries of age, nationality and culture. The story also explores the effect that separation and isolation can have on the human mind – when Michael is separated from his family, he faces a constant battle to maintain hope.



**Belief and Patience** – Morpurgo demonstrates the virtues of belief and patience throughout *Kensuke's Kingdom* e.g. Kensuke speaks to Michael about how he should be less anxious – a boat will eventually come – and is right. Also, Michael's mother's belief that he is alive leads to them being reunited.



### Chapter-by-Chapter Summary

– Alongside key quotations.

<b>Chapter 1</b>	Michael explains that he will tell the reader about how he went missing. He hadn't said anything for ten years, as he promised Kensuke. He begins to talk about his upbringing. His parents were made redundant. His dad bought <i>Peggy Sue</i> (a boat). After 6 months of training, (his mum gets her captain certificate) they set sail around the world.	<i>'I disappeared on the night before my twelfth birthday, July 28 1988.'</i>
<b>Chapter 2</b>	Michael describes how he spent most of the time wet. He also remarks on how busy life on the boat was (except for Stella Artois, the dog). He lists some of the amazing things that he saw, including marine life and the stars. His mum made sure that he was being taught properly. He also began keeping a log, which he will refer to in the next chapter.	<i>'Sea water, rain water – all of it is wet. I spent most of the time soaked to the skin.'</i>
<b>Chapter 3</b>	Michael shares some of his log entries. They experience some strong winds and scary situations. They travel around Spain, down the west coast of Africa, and across to South America. After Christmas, they sailed back to Africa, where they saw elephants and lions. At one point, they had to rescue Stella, who jumped overboard. After spending time in Australia, Michael and Peggy Sue are violently thrown overboard one night.	<i>'I remember thinking: this is silly, you haven't got your harness on, you haven't got your lifejacket on, you shouldn't be doing this. Then the boat started violently...'</i>
<b>Chapter 4</b>	Michael grasps onto his football in the sea. He cannot find Stella, and is resigned to dying. A mysterious character on a boat rescues him. When he awakes, he is on a beach on an island, with Stella. He explores the island, finding many creatures. A mysterious presence lays out food and water for him and Stella. He sees an orang-utan, and then, a man.	<i>'I was on a beach, a broad white sweep of sand, with trees growing thick and lush behind me right down to the beach.'</i>
<b>Chapter 5</b>	Michael describes the man, who is very old and thin. His name is Kensuke. He is angry about Michael lighting a fire, and seems to be suggesting that they stay away from each other, but Stella seems to like him. Michael stays on his own side of the island, unsuccessfully trying to find food for himself. Kensuke continues to leave Michael food overnight, and then a sheet. One day, on the horizon, Michael sees a super-tanker.	<i>'He was diminutive, no taller than me, and as old as a man I had ever seen. He wore nothing but a pair of tattered breeches bunched at the waist, and there was a large knife in his belt. He was thin, too.'</i>
<b>Chapter 6</b>	Michael is helpless as the boat glides past. He decides that next time he will build a fire and start building a beacon. When a 4-day storm passes, Michael goes to swim, but Kensuke appears, and tells him it is 'dangerous.' Michael sees a boat and lights a fire. Kensuke stamps it out. Angry, Michael defies him and swims – he is stung by jellyfish.	<i>'I was choking. I was going to die. I was going to drown, but I did not care. I just wanted the pain to stop.'</i>
<b>Chapter 7</b>	Kensuke rescues Michael and nurses him back to health. He lives in a vast, modernised cave. As Michael gets better, Kensuke teaches him to fish and gather fruit. The orang-utans follow Kensuke. He seemed to have found ways to meet every need. Michael teaches him English.	<i>'It was the beginning of an English lesson that was to last for months. Every day, down to dusk, I translated...'</i>
<b>Chapter 8</b>	Kensuke takes Michael out fishing for 'big fish.' He tells Michael that he was a doctor once, and explains that long ago he was the only survivor on a bombed ship that drifted to the island. He heard about the atomic bomb on his home city: Nagasaki. One time, poachers came for the orang-utans, who he saved. It was he who rescued Michael from the sea.	<i>'Americans say on radio 'big bomb fell on Nagasaki: Atomic Bomb. Many dead. I very sad person. I think Kimi dead.'</i>
<b>Chapter 9</b>	Michael tries to send a letter in a bottle – Kensuke finds it and is silent for a while. He decides to help Michael build a fire. They get on better than ever, playing & sharing stories. One day they help baby turtles get to the sea, and Kensuke decides that he too will be brave and find home.	<i>'I go home to Japan. Maybe I find Kimi. Maybe I find Michael. Maybe I find truth. I go with you Michael.'</i>
<b>Chapter 10</b>	Poachers arrive at the island. Kensuke and Michael work together to save the orang-utans. Then, one morning, a boat comes, the <i>Peggy Sue</i> . He is reunited with his parents. Kensuke stays on the island to protect the orang-utans. He tells Michael not to speak of him for 10 years.	<i>'For almost a year my mother and father had searched for me. Not a miracle, just faith.'</i>

### Morpurgo's Language Devices

Morpurgo's Language Devices		The Writer's Influences
Simile	<i>And he brought his hand down sharply like a chopper, separating the island in two.</i>	<i>"The names of my characters come from the things I see and hear about me. For example when I was writing <i>Kensuke's Kingdom</i>, I was stuck for a name for a Japanese man. I couldn't think of one that was original or worked for my story. Then I got lucky. I was doing an event at a school in London when a tall Japanese boy came up to get his book signed. I asked him his</i>
Personification	<i>'The forest became impenetrable at this point, dark and menacing.'</i>	
List of Three	<i>'I was frightened... angry... completely bewildered.'</i>	
Adverbs	<i>'I heard her drinking before I got there, tapping rhythmically, noisily, as she always did.'</i>	

